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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000414

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMANIS TELL IRAQI PRIME MINISTER MALIKI "LEAD ALL IRAQIS"

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo per 1.4 (B and D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Sultan Qaboos in his two-hour meeting with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister (PM) Nouri al-Maliki told the visitor that he should set aside parochial and personal interests to "govern all Iraqis." The PM reviewed current challenges facing his government, highlighting the challenges of dealing with ongoing sectarian violence, an uncooperative Iran, failing infrastructure and still weakened economy. He also expressed his regret that neither Riyadh nor Abu Dhabi had been willing to receive him and his delegation. The Omanis were pleased with the visit and were impressed with al-Maliki's understanding of the issues and commitment to resolving them. Nevertheless, the Omanis continue to question al-Maliki's ability to lead Iraq out of its current difficulties. The Iraqis reportedly neither sought nor were offered Omani aid. End summary.

¶2. (U) A delegation of ten Iraqi government officials arrived in Muscat from Kuwait on April 25 for a two-day visit to Oman. The delegation, led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, included: Minister of Interior Jawwad al-Boulani, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Rafi al-Isawi, National Security Advisor Muaffaq al-Rubai, and Sheikh Hammam Hamoudi, Chairman of the Council of Representative's Foreign Relations Committee. The Iraqi officials were received upon arrival by Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al-Said, who also hosted an official dinner in honor of the Iraqi Prime Minister. The centerpiece of the delegation's visit was the meeting with Sultan Qaboos, which was also attended by Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusef bin Alawi, Minister of the Royal Office General Ali bin Majid al-Maamari, Minister of Justice Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah bin Zaher al-Hinai, and Foreign Ministry Under Secretary Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi.

Excellent Visit

¶3. (C) Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusef bin Alawi told the Ambassador April 28 that the visit of PM al-Maliki and accompanying delegation to Muscat had been "excellent." The Omanis, he said, were impressed with Maliki's grasp of the issues and confidence he projected in addressing Iraq's security, political and economic problems. Maliki had appeared especially buoyed, said bin Alawi, by his meetings in Cairo with the Egyptian leadership as well as with AL Secretary General Amr Moussa (NFI).

¶4. (C) The Sultan and FM, who had several on-the-margin meetings with the Prime Minister in motorcades to and from the Sultan's palace and to the airport, had but one single, overarching message to Maliki: "You are Iraq's leader for all Iraqis; govern as one." This meant, said bin Alawi, that he should shed parochial loyalties and interests in order to

serve all Iraqis. It was a message delivered by Sultan Qaboos and reiterated by bin Alawi repeatedly. For his part, al-Maliki told the Omanis that security throughout Iraq had begun to improve and that Iraqi and American forces had managed to reduce violence somewhat of late. He acknowledged the need to do much more to reduce sectarian violence and to develop an effective reconciliation process. Recalling their own experience after the Dhofar rebellion of the early 1970's, the Omanis told him that reconciliation and firm, unbiased leadership were the keys to reducing ultimately the sectarian violence in Iraq.

#### Iranians, Infrastructure Big Worries

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15. (C) Al-Maliki told the Omanis that he was both angry with and concerned about Iranian interference in Iraq. They showed no interest, he said, in helping Iraq solve its problems or working with the Iraqi government. Instead, he reported to the Omanis, they are meddling and creating problems "in all areas" for the Iraqi government. As evidence of Iranian lack of cooperation, al-Maliki said that when he took off from Baghdad several weeks ago on his way to South Korea, the Iranians cancelled the previously granted overflight clearance and ordered his aircraft to return to Baghdad.

16. (C) Iraq continues to suffer from poor infrastructure, al-Maliki told the Omanis. He cited electricity, water, wastewater treatment and hospital care as especially severe. Nevertheless, he also reported that there had been improvements in these and other areas since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, just neither enough not fast enough. However, he claimed, the biggest economic problems were unemployment and low income, which exacerbated the sectarian strife and violence.

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#### Rejected by Saudi Arabia, UAE

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17. (C) Bin Alawi confirmed that the Iraqi PM had planned to visit Riyadh and Abu Dhabi after Muscat. However, al-Maliki told the Omanis that the Saudis and Emiratis "never responded" to the Iraqi request to visit. Bin Alawi could not explain the UAE's rejection, but opined that Saudi contempt for Maliki had become "serious" and that the Saudis were beginning to see the Iraqi PM not only as ineffective but also harmful to Iraq's and Saudi Arabia's long term interests.

#### No Aid Requests

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18. (C) Minister bin Alawi said that the Iraqis did not request Omani assistance "in any form" and the Omanis volunteered none. In response to the Ambassador's query regarding Iraqi difficulties with Iran, bin Alawi said the Iraqis did not ask for Oman's help. Bin Alawi also told the Ambassador that if asked, Oman would consider such a request seriously. He explained, however, that Iranian-GCC relations were "complicated" at present and he could not be sure that an approach by the Omanis would serve Iraq in the end. The Omanis and Iraqis did not discuss the change in U.S. strategy in Iraq or the ongoing debates on Iraq in the U.S. Congress.

#### Comment

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19. (C) Al-Maliki was starting in a hole with the Omanis, who had harbored the same doubts about his leadership and intentions as other GCC states. Therefore, bin Alawi's judgment of the visit as excellent may be taken as effectively meaning; "he wasn't as bad as we thought." In fact, bin Alawi made clear that the reason the Omanis received the Iraqis was because of Secretary Rice's request to bin Alawi last fall that the Omanis do so. Nevertheless, he appeared to be sincere in his praise of the visit and of al-Maliki.

